

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (currently amended): A fixing apparatus, comprising:

a fixing roller, having a middle portion and both end portions in an axis direction thereof, the middle portion being smaller than the both end portions in a diameter;

a pressing roller, rotated by being brought into press contact with the fixing roller so that a press contact portion is formed;

an exfoliating member, exfoliating a sheet-like record medium from a surface of the fixing roller after the record medium is passed through the press contact portion; and

restricting members, provided at both end portions of the exfoliating member, and brought into contact with the surface of the fixing roller so that an interval between the surface of the fixing roller and the exfoliating member is restricted,

wherein the restricting members are brought into contact with ~~first~~ portions of the fixing roller which are outside the press contact portion. ~~other than second portions of the fixing roller in which end edge portions of the pressing roller are brought into contact with the fixing roller.~~

2. (original): The fixing apparatus as set forth in claim 1, wherein an outer side portion of each of the restricting members is arranged on an outer side of each of both end edge portions of the fixing roller.

3. (original): The fixing apparatus as set forth in claim 1, wherein a middle portion of each of the restricting members in an axis direction thereof is brought into contact with each of both end edge portions of the fixing roller.

4. (original): A fixing apparatus, comprising:
a fixing roller, having a middle portion and both end portions in an axis direction thereof, the middle portion being smaller than the both end portions in a diameter;
a pressing roller, rotated by being brought into press contact with the fixing roller so that a press contact portion is formed;
an exfoliating member, exfoliating a sheet-like record medium from a surface of the fixing roller after the record medium is passed through the press contact portion; and
restricting members, provided at both end portions of the exfoliating member, and brought into contact with the surface of the fixing roller so that an interval between the surface of the fixing roller and the exfoliating member is restricted,
wherein an outer side portion of each of the restricting members is arranged on an outer side of each of both end edge portions of the fixing roller.

5. (currently amended): A fixing apparatus, comprising:
a fixing ~~member~~ roller, driven so as to rotate;
a pressing roller, rotated by being brought into press contact with the fixing roller so that a press contact portion is formed; and

an exfoliating member, exfoliating a sheet-like record medium from at least one of a surface of the fixing roller and a surface of the pressing roller after the record medium is passed through the press contact portion, and guiding the recording medium,

wherein the exfoliating member is provided on an upper side of an outlet of the press contact portion or a downstream side of an air flow from the outlet of the press contact portion;
~~and~~

wherein the exfoliating member is provided with a roller rotated in a direction of moving the record medium; and

wherein, when the record medium contacts the roller, the record medium pushes against the roller to increase a gap between the exfoliating member and the fixing roller.

6. (original): The fixing apparatus as set forth in claim 5, wherein the roller is shaped in either an abacus bead or a star wheel.

7. (original): The fixing apparatus as set forth in claim 5, wherein the roller is comprised of a synthetic resin.

8. (original): The fixing apparatus as set forth in claim 5, wherein a surface of the roller has a water repellency.

9. (new): The fixing apparatus as set forth in claim 5, wherein the fixing roller

comprises a heater.

10. (new): An apparatus, comprising:

a first roller;

a second roller that rotates in a press-contact relationship with the first roller, wherein a recording medium passes between the first roller and the second roller;

an exfoliating member comprising an exfoliating device and a restricting member,

wherein the exfoliating device contacts the recording medium to remove the recording medium from a surface of the first roller after the recording medium passes between the first roller and the second roller,

wherein the restricting member contacts a first region of the surface of the first roller to control the distance between the surface of the first roller and the exfoliating device and does not contact a second region,

wherein the second roller contacts the second region of the surface of the first roller and does not contact the first region,

wherein the second region of the surface is separated from the first region of the surface when viewed along a longitudinal axial direction of the first roller.

11. (new): The apparatus as claimed in claim 10, wherein a diameter of the first roller at the second region is smaller than a diameter of the first roller at the first region.

12. (new): The apparatus as claimed in claim 10, wherein the second roller is driven by the rotation of the first roller.

13. (new): The apparatus as claimed in claim 10, wherein a side edge of the restricting member, which is farthest from the second region of the first roller is located farther from the second region than an end edge of the first roller.

14. (new): The apparatus as claimed in claim 13, wherein the end edge of the first roller is substantially perpendicular to the longitudinal axial direction.

15. (new): The apparatus as claimed in claim 10, wherein a middle portion of the restricting member, in the longitudinal axis direction of the first roller, contacts a side edge of the first roller,

wherein the side edge is angled with respect to the longitudinal axis direction.

16. (new): The apparatus as claimed in claim 10, wherein the first roller is a fixing roller comprising a heater, and

wherein the second roller is a pressing roller.

17. (new): The fixing apparatus as claimed in claim 4, wherein a middle portion of each of the restricting members contacts each of the end edge portions of the fixing roller.